

SENATE JUDICIARY

Exhibit No. 1
Date: 2/18/15
Bill No. HB207



Feb. 18, 2015

Support for House Bill 207

To: Senate Judiciary Committee
From: Jim Rickman, Executive Director

Chairman Sales and committee members,

Montana has always been a leader when it comes to ensuring the rights of a free press. The laws passed by this legislative body – and specifically this committee – have ensured through the years that Montana journalists have been free to report the business of this state. For that, we are incredibly grateful.

Being considered by this committee today is House Bill 207, which addresses a loophole in Montana's Media Confidentiality Act, commonly called the reporter "shield" law. The law protects journalists from having to disclose the source of information obtained as part of their duties as reporters. It is considered one of the best in the country. HB207 addresses an issue that crafters of the original law likely never foresaw – the electronic age and the means by which information is gathered and, more importantly, stored.

HB207 addresses a scenario in which a government agency might try to obtain information through a digital server. The bill's object is to provide the same blanket of protection to a reporter's information on an iCloud, email server or a third-party server as information stored in a reporter's notebook or on his work computer.

It is a good bill, and we support it without hesitation.

This bill received bipartisan support in the House Judiciary Committee and on the full floor of the House. We hope your committee will see the same merits of this bill as we do.

Sincerely,

Jim Rickman

Our Mission:

To advance and sustain the news publishing industry in Montana

RESEARCH LIBRARY

Exhibit No.

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Page No.